

Picture Yourself in Four Years: The College Experience

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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April 2020

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2020

Abstract

This thesis is a culmination of diptych writings that pair and respond to photos that showcase our experiences over the last four years at Ball State. The photos were chosen by each of us separately to showcase significant moments and some of the events overlap between our stories. Since our journeys were so similar, the progression of writing flows chronologically and is relatable to many students that go through similar experiences. The journey of creating this project was a personal experience for each of us while still possessing an outward value to the public and other students. We were able to dig deep into our memories and digest the experiences we had for others to learn from, relate to, and even just enjoy. Throughout this semester, we've pushed ourselves past our given talents and majors to produce something that made us think outside of the box and try something new. We hope that current and future members of the Ball State community enjoy a glimpse into our lives over the last four years.

Acknowledgments

I would to thank the Ball State Honors College and Dr. Berg for having faith in Hanna and me as we completed this project. Thank you to my family for pushing me to always be better and thank you to my roommates for the constant support. Lastly, thank you to Hanna for being with me every step of the way for the last four years.

Process Analysis Statement

Hanna Kadinger and I wanted to step outside of the box for our thesis. I felt that it was expected of me to complete some sort of statistical analysis for my thesis, given my major. I had not had the opportunity to be extremely creative in my course work during my time at Ball State and I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to see what I could do when I was able to really run with a project on my own terms. Hanna and I began our time at Ball State sitting side my side in the Honors College and our journeys continued alongside each other for four years. We believed that we would be able to communicate our college experiences through pairing photographs with short writings. Hanna's poems and my own alternate throughout our thesis as we travel chronologically through the last four years. We wanted our thesis to be able to serve as a guide for incoming students to show all that their college years might entail. We hope that the combination of our experiences will shed light on the friendships, the memories, and the personal growth that being a Ball State Honors College student encourages.

I began to compile a list of the meaningful events that occurred in my life over the last four years. I skimmed through my collections of photographs to find old memories that I had deeply filed away. It was hard for me to have the perspective necessary to determine what made a difference in my life. Which experiences were the most valuable? Which ones were simply surface level and relatively irrelevant? Four years ago felt like forever. Thinking back to my seventeen-year-old-freshman-self filled me with nostalgia. I had so many expectations for college. Each photo helped remind me of how different I and my goals have become with each new interaction and new day here at Ball State. I decided to choose the memories that spoke the loudest to me. Whether it was the day the picture was taken or the people standing next to me, it

was important to me that I felt strongly about what I was experiencing in each photograph. I wanted my writings to fill in the gaps and uncertainties that the photos may leave behind.

When I began working on this project, I was embarrassed by everything I wrote. I felt like a fourth grader trying to make rhymes. I didn't want to share anything. I wouldn't even work on them in public in fear that someone may look over my shoulder and see my computer screen. Hanna and I are not poets or professional writers. We used creative writing as an avenue to express ourselves and our emotions, regardless of if the poetry ended up being amazing or not. It was this continuous reminder that allowed me to open up about what I had created and share it with others. I received non-judgmental feedback from Hanna and Dr. Berg, as well as a few good friends, that encouraged me to further explore the depths of my experiences in my writing. As we continued throughout the semester, I became more confident in my writing to the point of being excited for others to read it.

This semester was filled with reflection. Working on this thesis required concentration and thoughtfulness. I sometimes struggled to put myself in a mindset that allowed me to explore my pasts and my experiences with the intent of deriving my attitude and my feelings from that day. Some memories came back much easier than others.

Surprisingly, I found it easier to write about the trying times than the triumphant times. This may be because I am more aware of how the hardships have ultimately positively impacted my life. These challenges required me to grow to move past the negative feelings relating to the bad experiences. Studying the positives seemed less important to me in terms of personal growth. Looking back though, I was able to see that both positive and negative experiences helped shape my course. I learned that my successes gave me the reassurance that I am on the right track and making good decisions. I found my greatest success with my poems when I let my ideas openly

flow out onto the page without any reservations. The initial “brain dump” allowed me to see all of the different feelings I was experiencing relating to the particular event and photograph. Once all of those thoughts were in front of me, I was able to condense what I was saying to bring a more concise message across that communicates all that I wanted to about the event.

This thesis project required Hanna and I to leave convention and comfort behind. We entered into the creative world without experience, but with a mission to communicate real and honest emotion that future students can relate to. Each trial and each tribulation I experienced helped broaden my horizons and increase my ability to empathize with and understand others. Digging into these memories forced me to reflect on what I have grown through over the past four years. Each moment left an impact that currently influenced how I interact with the world today. I was able to determine what I took away my experiences and how I want to channel those takeaways into my life going forward. I hope that those who read this in the future will be able to share our passion for reflection use their college experiences to grow as people.

Day One

I can write my own story now, but
what do I want it to say?
I don't have to be who I was
yesterday.
I had nothing and everything to
prove.
And I needed my transition to be
smooth.
I was trying to impress while
keeping my anxieties at bay.

My first day here with all my new
peers
Hoping I say the things they want to
hear
The talkative girl said "you and I are
friends now"
Thank god she did because I did
know how.
After meeting Hanna, one thing
became clear.

I was searching for happiness and
friendship and health,
I'd soon find that the way to get
there was to be myself.



The Beginning

We've become comfortable here
Creating a home away from home
This journey began with a chance
meeting of two vulnerable young
woman
Yearning to fit into a sea full of new
faces
We became a source of comfort for
each other
Not knowing what this relationship
would turn into
Now we're prepared to share this
journey with you
Through the highs and lows, we've
learned and grown how to conquer
this thing called college
So hopefully this helps you
In some way
And if it doesn't
It helped us
Reflect and rediscover why we
chose to do this in the first place

Long Distance

You were the hardest to leave
when I chose a school over 500 miles away.
I couldn't stand to be one foot apart from you
on a normal day.

I saved these memories of our first vacation together
Playing mini golf on a course I'd seen a hundred times
Was different when I walked it with your hand in mine.

My hat looked better backwards on you than it did on me
I pictured you wearing it every day when I was at school
too far away.





Alone at Last

This is what it looked like when I was scared out of my mind.

Alone for once and my mind filled with what ifs.

What if I can't find my class?

What if I chose the wrong major?

What if I don't fit in?

What if I overdress?

What if I underdress?

What if they know I'm a freshman?

What if I can't do it?



The Lanyard

But I did it. Maybe slightly overdressed and over prepared.

Only kidding of course.

I wandered into HONR 203 with Dr. Berg, only to find there were no other freshman in sight after our short and timid introductions.

My cover was blown. My fear from the night before had become reality.

They know. I mean come one, who wears a dress on the first day?

I nestled into my chair and sparked up chit chat with the classmate to my right.

They asked if this was my first day... it was.

I sunk into my chair and tried to act like it was no biggie.

"It's the dress right?"

No, it was the lanyard. The one I was sure every college student had.

I tucked it into my backpack and went on with my day, gaining confidence with every class.

If I learned one thing from the first day, it's that no one's first day is easy. Everyone has some kind of nerves and jitters. So try to ease your mind and realize that you WILL get through this. I did... somehow.

The New Guy

“Sweet just got sweeter” read our seafoam comfort colors tank tops that would become my new favorite shirt. The hectic, exhausting, and emotionally draining week had brought us to this point. The energy of the group was overwhelming. I don’t know what I would do if Hanna wasn’t there too. The women I had met that brought me there were kind and inviting, but they already knew each other. We were outsiders. I was new and uncomfortable, but also hopeful that the next four years would give me everything they had promised. Little did I know, this awkward and nerve-racking gathering was the first step to finding myself.





Family

It all seems pretty cheesy, don't ya think?

The matching shirts

The perfectly stacked photos

The deception leading up to the big reveal

But they are my family away from home

The ones to lift you up through the valleys of these four years

The ones you call when you are craving McDonald's at 12AM

The ones that support you through the decision to change your major twice

The ones that keep you here because this thing called college isn't easy

I swore I'd never be "that girl" - but here I am, and I am so thankful that I along with so many others decided to be "that girl"

My Mentor

This formal pairing
With my guide, my counselor,
My forever friend.

From the beginning
Katie was there to lean on
With arms wide open.

Together we were
As she pushed me to become
The woman I am.





The Changing of the Seasons

If there's one thing I've learned in college, it's that friendships are not forever.

They change with the seasons and leave you wondering why you ever liked summer in the first place.

You have this idea that you have to appease each disagreement and make it through each fight but some things just aren't worth saving.

Each person in your life came in a different season and may leave in a different season as well.

They served a purpose and while no one is advocating for broken friendships, it's okay if the relationships you build don't grow and move with you.

I encourage you to allow people to help you realize what you want in life and journey through college together, but if there comes a time that they start to feel like a force pulling you back, it may be time to go your separate ways.

Take the time to grieve and reflect on that relationship. You want to be able to look back on those fond memories without the sour taste of summer.

Before you know it, the leaves will change and you'll be staring in the face of fall.

Social Distancing (before it was cool)

Dorm room snapchat selfies
My phone camera begged me to get out of my room
Dishes piled up on top of my dresser
And I waited for my Facetime with Ally to resume

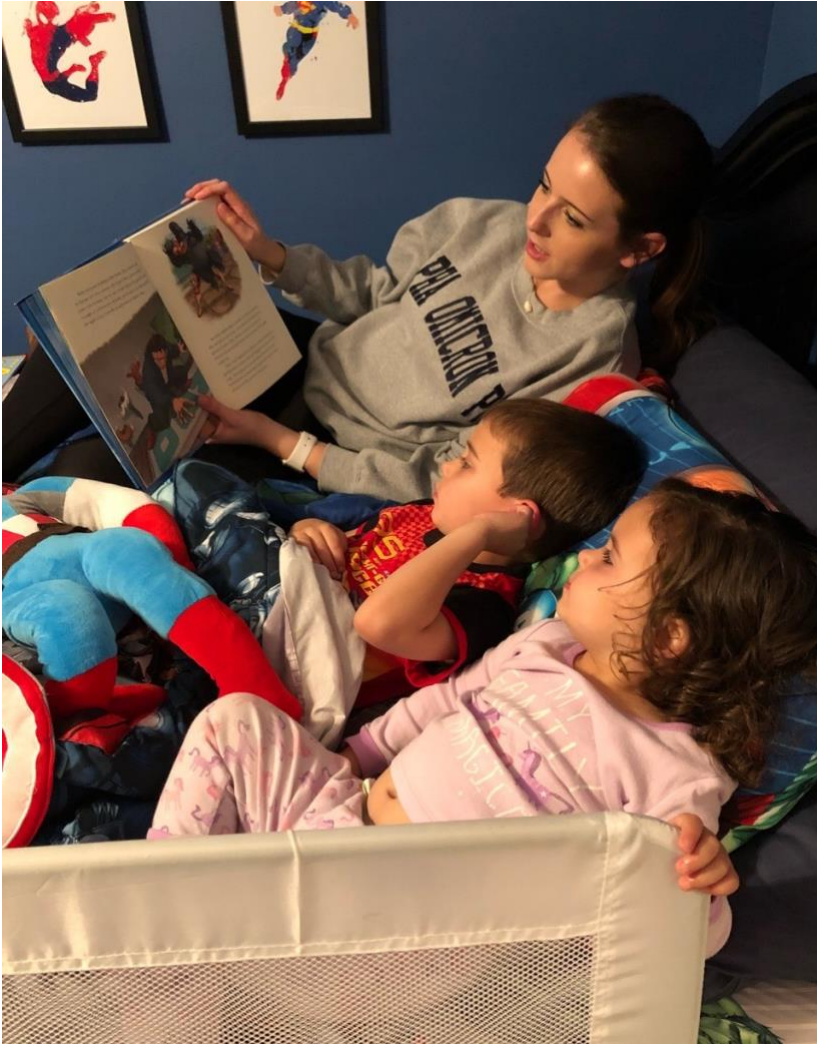
You were my everything freshman year.
I wanted to be there or you to be here.

We were trying to beat the distance.
You were struggling with all of the things that you were
going through
And I wanted to be of assistance.

I only left for classes and meals
So no need to do my hair
People asked me to go and hang out with them
And I just didn't care

I know I missed out
By staying in my room
But you were the only thing I could think about.





Focus

There's always time for the one's that mean the most
"Just one more" they'd say, snuggling closer into the story

Wanting to sleep myself, I'd rush through another on my way to bedtime,

Not thinking about this moment being captured forever
We're trained to think about the next obligation without finishing the last and multitask so no one thing gets our full attention.

But that's not fair to now
Or later

Love Yourself

This is the thinnest I have ever been
I felt confident in every bathing suit I was in.

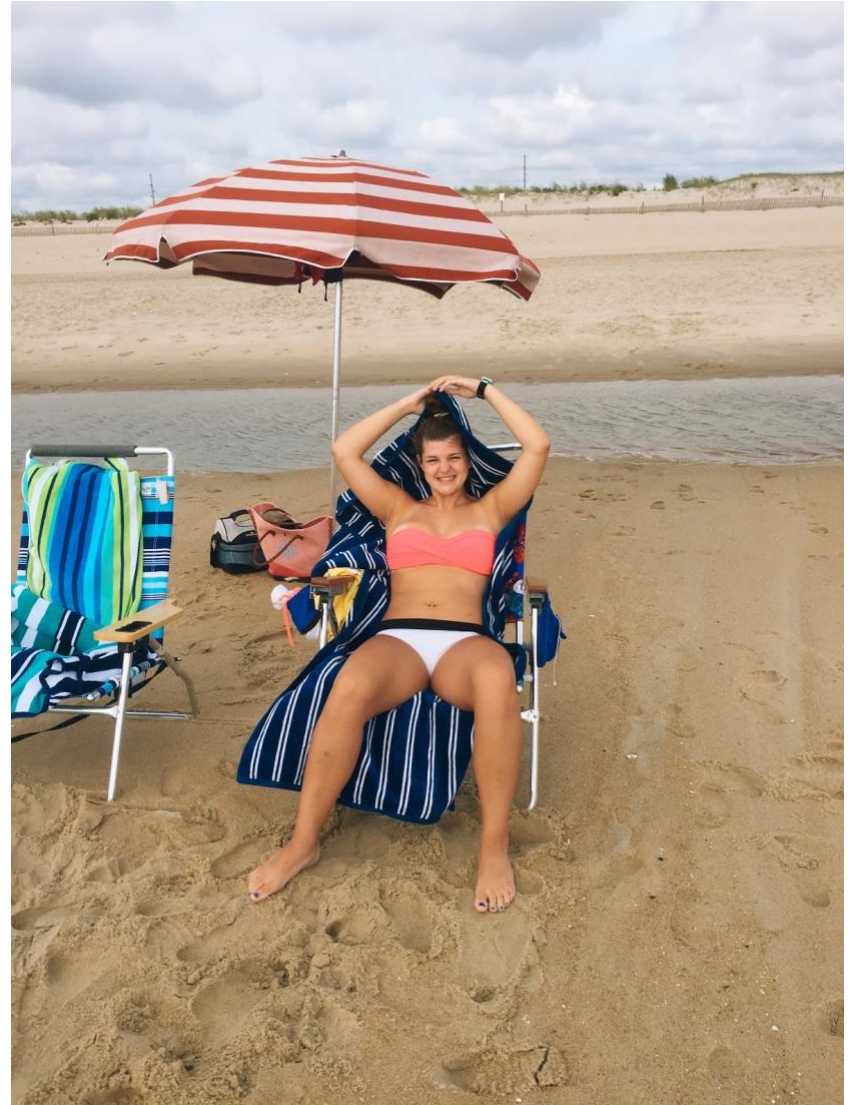
I struggled with my weight my whole life
And this summer it was something I wanted fight

My gym alarm went off at 4 in the morning
I left the house to others snoring

My meals were planned, calculated and scheduled
And I only ate what and when I was allowed.

I looked amazing
My body felt great
And I got used to missing the food I didn't let myself eat.

But that didn't last
So here I am again
Looking to the past
Wishing I hadn't let it fall away.





The View

It's so easy to be too cool for it.

It's easy to say, no way, that's not for me.

Or that's weird, I could never do that, I'm not talented enough.

I've heard I'm not smart enough, not good enough, and just flat out I don't want to.

But let me tell you, you are never too old to learn something new.

My 6 year old nephew has taught me more in his short life than I ever knew was possible.

His face lights up in ways ours don't anymore.

He has a pure excitement for life and the confidence to tackle anything.

Not even an ocean filled with the vast unknown can scare him.

I challenge you to chase after every wave that comes your way because you don't want to be the one that gets stuck in the sand.

The Girl Who Lived Down The Hall

September of sophomore year and I finally felt like I fit in here.

We moved into campus early and Madison lived 4 doors down from me.

I got to hang out with the friends she had already made, people I didn't reach out to because I was afraid. We would sit on the floors in the dorms laughing until my belly felt warm.

Since this photo was taken, we've worn matching outfits time and time again.

This was my first college group of friends.

Now these are the friends who share my home. Since our first semester of friendship, closer and closer we have grown.

They never allow for a moment that is dull
And it all started with the girl who lived down the hall.



Recruitment Season

Bags under my eyes from a lack of sleep
Seemingly endless hours of making memories to forever keep
I was ready for the event ahead but
I was exhausted.

The excitement would carry me through
And when it was over
We thought of all the work for next year that we would get to do.



Peace, Love, and AOLL

By now we'd grown more confidence in ourselves and the women we were a year ago were nowhere to be found. We finally felt like we had two feet on the ground and found our sense of belonging on Ball State's campus. Everyone comes in wanting to identify with someone or something and for some, they never find that group. Whether it's an identity you build yourself or one you're born into, this campus will help you find where you belong. It can be a lonely four years without your people and while your journey doesn't have to look like ours, I hope you find your sense of belonging and your tribe. There's a campus full of people out there so open yourself up to the idea that there are people out there waiting to belong too.



What will you do with some sunshine and time?

One of the best parts of college is the long summer breaks.

We dream of sitting poolside and taking long naps for 4 months before returning in the Fall.

But that's not exactly how it happened for me.

My summers were filled with internships, working, and volunteering my time - which sometimes included washing hogs.

Instead of sleeping my summer away, I chose to make the most of my time and do things that would advance my future career, help my community, and invest in my future.

One of the best parts of college is the long summer breaks;

That gives you the opportunity to learn beyond a classroom.

No exams, no readings, just the real world and the time to use it.

While you deserve a break from the stress of your studies, use your time wisely because there is so much to learn in four months that no lecture will provide to you when you return in the Fall.

48 Hour Rule

Confrontation.
Intimidation. Confusion. Self-doubt.

Confrontation
Conversation. Understanding. Compromise.

Confrontation.
Growth.





A legacy

There are few words that can be said, spoken, or typed to truly describe how it would have been to survive college without them. I quite frankly couldn't have done it. They are there when others aren't because regardless of bias, they're there by blood. Unlike many, I made the choice to travel 10 minutes down the road for college and live out a third generation legacy of becoming a Cardinal. For four years of high school, I dreamed about getting away, having my autonomy, and finally getting my independence. I was sure I would regret the decision to stay at home and earn that degree while my friends had their independence and freedom.

Boy was I wrong.

Life threw some curveballs through these last four years, as will it for you. Maybe you'll create your own family here at Ball State and maybe you'll be like me and rely on your kinfolk more than ever. While you gain your freedom and you feel like you're finally alone for one, you can't do it alone, so don't try. I know what the taste of independence feels like - it's deceiving.

The Breakup

The icy morning was a relief to wake up to.
The tear-filled phone call that lasted until three in the morning didn't let me get any sleep.
Luckily I had sisters giving me things to do.
Our snowy photoshoot was a good distraction but I couldn't help thinking about that conversation.

Like that Saturday morning, my words to her were cold.
She thought we were forever and I wasn't sold.

Her loathing started then, and that's the hardest part.
Every now and then I feel her still in my heart.





Hillary

There will a person that changes you, molds you, stops you in your tracks and shakes you.

The one that ignites something inside of you that you didn't know was there.

The one that fills the void others have left.

The unexpected, unplanned, and unwanted friendship that the universe forces on you for some unknown reason.

The one that leaves you wondering what His plan is and why you've been placed in the same spot at the same time.

The ones that bring you the calm in the storm and shelter you through its wrath.

The one that brings spontaneity to your type-A personality and thrusts you past your comfort zone.

My one is Hillary. May you find your Hillary.

Thanks for the Sleepovers

Park Hall room 372
Was my favorite space for me and you.
Late night talks,
And get-to-class-on-time walks,
Relationship doubts
And switching majors in and out.
A lot changed during sophomore year
And you helped keep my head clear.

Though our t-shirts had different names,
You were like my sister and it didn't matter that our
sorority wasn't the same.

We're not as close as we were then.
Honestly, I'm not sure it will be like that again.
For you, my heart is still filled with appreciation
And I'll always look to you for advice and inspiration.





Invisible

You smile through the anxiety attack because you have to be strong.

You take a few deep breaths because you have to make it to your next class because there's an exam worth 40% of your grade.

You lash out at the people who love you most because you're afraid to tell them what's really going on.

You spend days alone with no human contact because you just can't bear to utter the words "I need you."

You finally work up the courage to tell your doctor at your annual physical that you'd like to look into medication, because surely that'll do the trick.

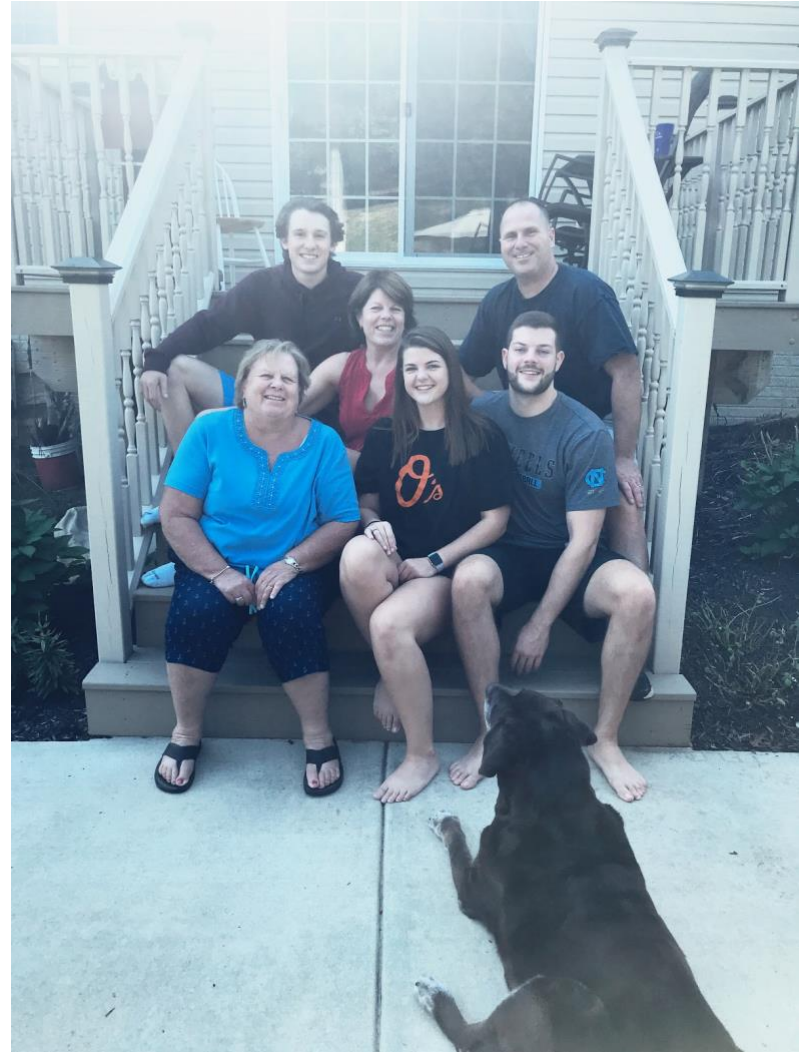
You push away all of the people closest to you and turn down opportunities because you're not good enough.

You take 20 minutes to find an outfit only to cancel plans because you look too fat and ugly in all of the clothes you own.

You'll get through it, but it'll always be a part of who you are.

Carroll County, MD

Moments like these don't happen every day
Maybe just twice a year since I've been away.
Four years ago I couldn't wait to get some space
But it's hard to keep up when you're not in the same
place.
Things aren't the same at home anymore.
These steps and this patio belong to someone else.
Brady is no longer staring at my fist full of treats.
Jack's living on his own and Christian somehow thinks
he's grown.
Though not everything looks the same
Distance is a battle we have overcome.





Tongues out

A selfie won't hurt a thing, even if you're covered in rain and sweat.

Freedom Finally

Summer time in Muncie
And my first time really on my own.
I'd been waiting and waiting for this but when it came I
was so far out of my comfort zone,
I didn't think it would be a big deal remembering to feed
myself at every meal

My first taste of adulthood and I wasn't at all scared but
truthfully, I was very unprepared.

It forced me to grow up
and it let me have fun,
I was free to do what I pleased
And sing in the shower to no one.

I'm still learning how to manage my day-to-day
I haven't mastered it yet, but I'm on my way.





Life of an Intern

A summer alone, with no one but me.
Only so much time but so much to see.
My days spent in the Capital, buzzing around.
Tour after tour, I was finally home bound.

From parades to baseball, we saw it all
Monuments and museums along the National Mall.
So many mirror selfies, "look mom it's me!"
Ready to work hard and eager to please.

I may not end up in DC, and that's okay
I think for now, Muncie is my place to stay.
Take your time, experience those places,
Because one day you'll wake up in a sea of new faces.

Where's My Clipboard?!

I've always liked to take the lead and liked to be in charge
I was excited that my responsibilities this week were large.

It was my job to keep our numbers afloat
While making sure all of our members all had a vote.

No time for many pictures and lacking sleep - I was running all around
Collecting papers while others were preparing the background.

I'm thankful that I had Mac on my team
And all my other friends on whose support I would lean.

We scurried, we rushed, we crammed and we stressed
And our recruitment was successful - I would say one of the best.





College Sweetheart

The one I'll take with me after college; the first glimpse of our journey.

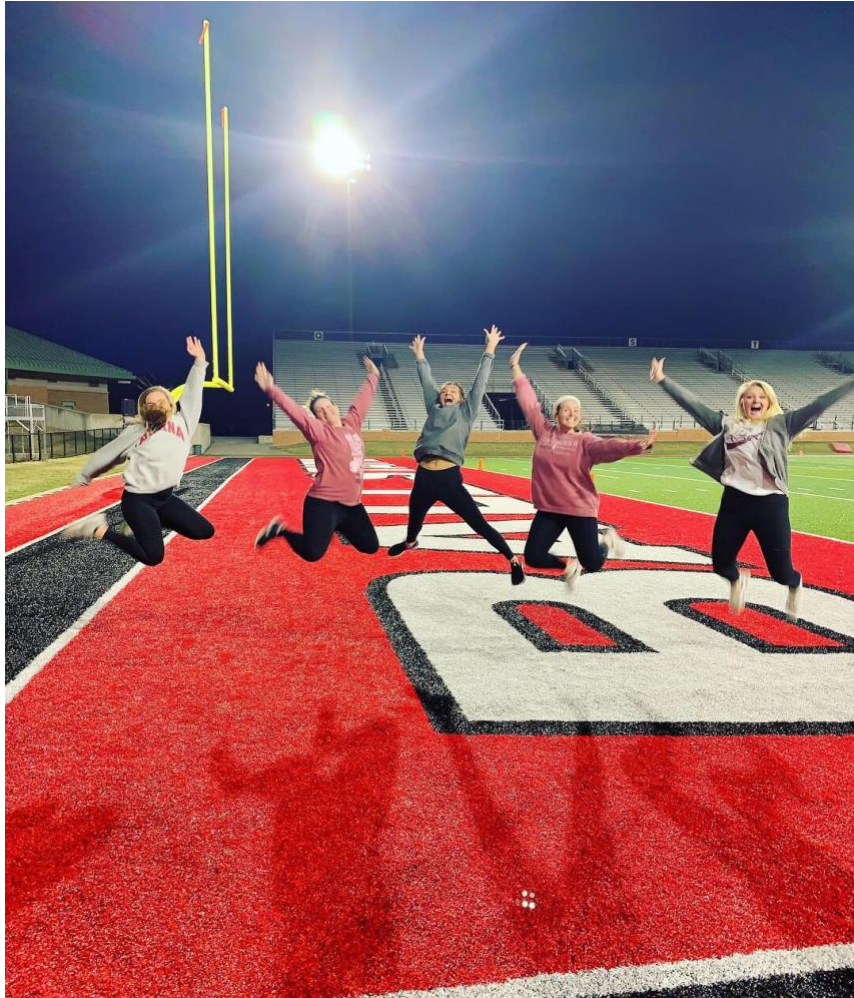
I volunteer

Bold
And unafraid.
Not hesitant to accept a new challenge and
Not threatened by a lack of experience.

Little did I know at the time, I would walk through the year
with their hands in mine as we guided each other through
the highs and lows of learning something entirely new.

Growth happens outside of the comfort zone.





1, 2, 3, Jump!

Don't take yourself or others too seriously, there's no time for that.

They were Roommates

Living with six women means constant entertainment
Living with these women means continuous encouragement

It's hard to find a group of people that see it all.
Many will be with you when you fly, but few when you fall.
Every early morning and every late night,
I am always surrounded by their light.

Their goals grow in different directions than mine.
Our net is wide spread.
Each individually and collectively working towards the
bright future ahead.

It wasn't all great.
We lacked privacy and rarely experienced quiet.
But despite my repeated wishes that my roommates
would do their dishes,
I wouldn't trade, swap, or drop one thing.

Friendships developed and deepened with each personal
celebration and every long day
And I'm grateful to have something that makes it hard to
move away.





1100 W. Carson

There will come a time when you say goodbye to the dorm.

You move into a house with some friends, it's the norm.
They may not be your besties, but that may change.
Living on your own can feel a little bit strange.

Bonfire after bonfire we bonded and got close
But when no one cleans the bathroom it can get pretty gross. We'd throw a party or two and decorate for Christmas

I'm sure the neighbor boys really miss us.

I wish I would have swallowed my pride and communicated more

With these wonderful women instead of closing my door.
Living with people is hard and that's something I learned
But these lessons take time and must be earned.

Foster Mom

Sit, fetch, down, stay.
All he wanted to do was play.
But I didn't mind, I liked to play too
I'd been waiting to foster someone just like you.
My roommates had left, and I hated living alone
But lucky for me, you needed a home.
I'd rush home from work to let you outside.
We would walk through campus and go to the park for
hours at a time.
You didn't always listen and sometimes caused some
trouble
But I loved you through it all and the experience made
me humble.
But before too long, I got a call,
A friend of a friend saw your picture on my Facebook
wall.
She was looking for a pup and thought you were sweet,
And couldn't wait until you could meet.
You got along right away and the paperwork was filed the
next day.
I see her pictures all the time and I remember when you
were mine.





Radiant

Bringing sunshine to every dark place is a specialty of hers.

Megan

Looking back now I can see where I went wrong
It was the timing that was right when she came along.
Regardless of the red flags I dragged myself into the hole
of infatuation.
Being alone was scarier than being in the wrong
relationship.





Family

I am a third generation Cardinal who had little choice on where I was destined to go to college. This university has become a home to me throughout my four years and has given so much to my family. When I arrived on this campus, I was determined to make my experience count and figure out where my place was in such a large group of people. The Homecoming Steering Committee gave me that place. I was able to serve alongside the Alumni Association and plan Homecoming for current students, faculty, and alumni. This process gave me a new perspective on what it means to be a Cardinal. I am determined to inspire others to not think of themselves as an individual human on this campus, but as one member of the large Ball State family. Ball State is our home and can provide opportunities that are unimaginable if you can come in with an open heart and mind. I can't wait to graduate and serve as an engaged alumni who is able to give back so other students can have similar amazing experiences like I did.

Family Over Everything

You wouldn't have seen these smiles a year ago
We were on rocky terms when I left for school.
I thought I was over criticized, I was told I was being
dramatic.
I thought I was brave, I was told I was a disgrace.
Family is supposed to love and support you,
So were the things they were saying true?
I believed I was embarrassing and intolerable.
It took separation and time for me to feel confident
enough to speak up.
Once I did I felt heard and finally relieved,
We were able to repair our relationship and it left me
feeling loved and accepted.
I wish I hadn't waited so long to take the first step.





My Women

There are few people in life that will be there through it all.

They don't care whether you have the latest iPhone, or the lululemon leggings.

They care that you're okay, and you're well, they care about your successes and failures and your resilience through it all.

They'll answer every call, and solve all problems.

They want to see you try, and try your best, even if that doesn't mean the best outcome.

For me, these people are my mother and grandmother, but for you this may look different.

I truly could not have gotten through these four years without them and I wouldn't want to think about what it would have been like if I had to.

While I've met so many people at Ball State that will support me, nurture me, and care for me, nothing will ever compare to the love of these women.

I worked hard for this diploma, but I owe all I am and all I ever will be to them.

Welcome to the Real World

Welcome to the real world.
Have your hair perfectly curled.
Your handshake must be firm,
And you must work on their terms.
Act like a lady,
And mind your manners.
Don't speak out of term,
And laugh at their banter.
Do you work,
Don't make a mistake.
Stare at a computer until you get a headache.
Starting at the bottom
But that's not where I'll stay.
Would you like a copy of my resume?



Homecoming

A night that I'd waited for since I'd watched AOII seniors on stage three years ago

I worked with Madison for hours to put the perfect choreography together

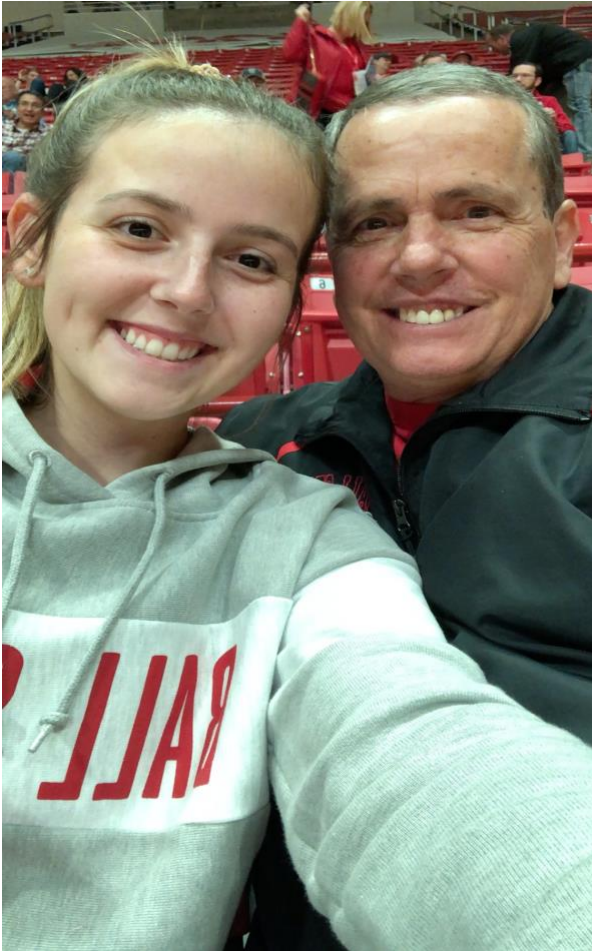
Rehearsals were every night and we wanted to win

Just thinking about my chapter screaming for us was enough motivation

After all the practice and preparation, I put on my matching Beatles shirt and I was ready.

Minutes on the stage felt like seconds.





Timeout

Cheering for our Cards in the same way we've done since I was little.

Hoping the concession stand made a good batch of popcorn.

I wouldn't trade this moments for the world.

Rushing from class or a meeting to make a 7pm tipoff.

Praying for a victory.

Calendar full of games, we haven't missed one in years.

Home court, Worthen Area, was our favorite place to be.

In our same seats, Section O, Row H, Seats 6 and 7.

Rivalry after rivalry, we loved each game.

Proud to make time in a hectic schedule to spend time with Dad.

Family Tree

A stereotypical Greek Family picture with us all stacked on top of each other. Three years ago when I had my big/little reveal, it was only me and Katie. It was always a goal of mine to be at the top of a full Greek family picture. Watching each of these women step up to take a little which completed our family tree makes me nostalgic and proud. While relationships are made and broken, my Greek family is full and standing strong amongst all the rest that is going on in the world. And that is important to me.





Thinking upside-down

The biggest thing college will teach you is to be open to different perspectives. The world is much bigger than a small town in Indiana. I've met types of people I didn't even know existed and through them I've learned more about myself. We introduce ourselves by our pronouns out of respect for others' differences. We create spaces for each human to exist because where they came from before may not have been so welcoming. We respect individuals not because we believe the same, but because we expect the same extended to us. I hope the Ball State that exists in 10 years continues to be filled with good people as it is today. Be good people.

Class of 2020

Our celebration
And all of our recognition
Was taken away

We're trying to stay sane
As we keep up with our lives
In the wake of disruption, cancellation, and uncertainty.

All preparation is now irrelevant
Lives and plans are on hold -
I've always struggled to be patient but we'll all keep
hanging on.



The End



I've imagined ringing the thesis bell for years now. Upon the completion of our thesis, we would ring the bell together and take our photo to commemorate the end of the best four years. Instead, the doors are locked, the lights are off, and there is not a professor in sight. The weather is changing and the sun is out but the students are nowhere to be found. It seems as though summer break came early, but this is no break at all.

Everything we've been looking forward to has been stolen. No ringing of the thesis bell, no honors recognition ceremony, no formal commencement, no AOII senior week or alumna ceremony, and no celebration with family and friends. This is such a big milestone in life that will pass by with only memories and no formal transition as life usually gives.

In an attempt to make it feel as normal as possible, I decorated my cap and threw on my gown and regalia to snap a photo by the house I feel raised me during these four years. I've grown up here, challenged myself here, been encouraged here, and left here as a confident woman ready to take on the world. Whether you're ready or not, this university will change you, challenge you, confront you, and create you. It doesn't take a formal ceremony to commence the beginning of your new adventure, but for me, it took a photo.